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Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations from the programme evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The present report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), prepared by the Inspection and Evaluation Division, is submitted in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its twenty-second session (see A/37/38, para. 362) to review the implementation of its recommendations three years after taking decisions on evaluations submitted to the Committee. The triennial review determines the extent to which the six recommendations emanating from the programme evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) by OIOS have been implemented.

The 2015 OIOS evaluation of UNHCR focused on one of the agency's priorities, namely durable solutions. UNHCR has taken significant steps to implement all of the six recommendations emanating from that evaluation. This triennial review determined that four recommendations have been implemented (recommendations 1–3 and 5) and two recommendations have been partially implemented (recommendations 4 and 6).

Since 2015, durable solutions have gained significant attention at the global level. In May 2016, the World Humanitarian Summit was held in Istanbul, and in September 2016, United Nations Member States adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. Both events created international momentum to promote safe and durable solutions. With the New York Declaration, its comprehensive refugee response framework and the new multi-year, multi-partner protection and solutions strategies, UNHCR not only developed and adopted global, regional and local advocacy tools to find solutions, it transitioned to a multi-year planning and funding approach for solutions, which was applied in a growing number of regions and

* The dates for the substantive session are tentative.
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countries. UNHCR also significantly enhanced collaboration with development partners, established a new Division of Resilience and Solutions, and strengthened the evidence base for decision-making around solutions. While still in the early stages, preliminary results of durable solutions were emerging at the field level as a consequence of the comprehensive refugee response framework and the multi-year multi-partner strategies.

Recommendation 1 addressed the need for UNHCR to implement a multi-year planning cycle for solutions-related activities and pursue multi-year funding. UNHCR had since introduced the multi-year multi-partner protection and solutions strategies, a multi-year planning tool for solutions-related activities. The strategies were tested and rolled out in more than 20 countries. UNHCR also enhanced its engagement with donors regarding multi-year funding, leading to a growing share of financial resources that exceeded a 12-month implementation period.

Recommendation 2 addressed the need for UNHCR to develop advocacy strategies for solutions at the global, regional and operational levels. The adoption of the New York Declaration, facilitated by UNHCR, was a global advocacy success, and it provided UNHCR with a powerful global advocacy tool for durable solutions, in the form of the comprehensive refugee response framework for finding specific durable solutions at the regional and country levels. It was applied in a growing number of regions and countries.

Recommendation 3 addressed the need for UNHCR to develop a schedule to ensure the conduct of regular, targeted meetings with development actors around a solutions/transition partnership coordination model. With the comprehensive refugee response framework, UNHCR had a coordination model to enhance the collaboration with development partners in specific country contexts. At the global level, UNHCR intensified collaborations with development partners, most notably the World Bank.

Recommendation 4 requested UNHCR to develop a staff development strategy to strengthen skills for creating, implementing and assessing solutions strategies. While UNHCR enhanced staff training for solutions, developed guidance material and revised job descriptions to include the solutions dimensions, a clear capacity-building strategy based on solutions was still lacking, posing an ongoing challenge.

Recommendation 5 requested UNHCR to review existing internal solutions structures to assess whether restructuring could improve effectiveness in programming. In 2016, the new High Commissioner mandated an organizational assessment of UNHCR headquarters. Subsequently, the High Commissioner endorsed the recommendation to create a new Division of Resilience and Solutions, which was established on 1 February 2018.

Recommendation 6 requested UNHCR to create an evidence-based portfolio to be used for advocating solutions. Since 2016, UNHCR had undertaken major efforts to strengthen the evidence base for solutions. However, there was neither a specific evaluation plan regarding solutions, nor a best practice portal, nor a research plan on solutions.

Three important changes remained to be fully implemented. First, while in-house capacities for solutions were built, more systematic and continued efforts were required in order to strengthen the skills for creating, implementing and assessing solutions strategies. Second, the new Division of Resilience and Solutions had yet to be made operational. Once fully functional, the new Division could potentially plan and coordinate evaluation and research activities for solutions at the organizational level. Third, there was a continued need to better organize and bring together documented experience on solutions in an easily accessible place. UNHCR concurred with these conclusions.

I. Introduction

1. At its fifty-fifth session, in 2015, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), prepared by the Inspection and Evaluation Division, on the programme evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (E/AC.51/2015/5).

2. The Committee expressed appreciation and high regard for the important work of UNHCR. Members of the Committee noted the increasingly complex environment in which UNHCR worked, the rising number of displaced persons and the prevalence of external challenges, including ongoing conflict and the lack of political will and funding. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly endorse the recommendations contained in paragraphs 60 to 65 of the OIOS report on the evaluation of UNHCR.

3. This report was issued pursuant to a triennial review of the recommendations, and examined the status of implementation of the six recommendations contained in the report. The review also assessed whether implementation of the recommendations contributed to programme changes, and if so, to what extent.

4. The methodology for this triennial review included:

(a) A review and analysis of biennial progress reports on the status of recommendations, which were monitored through the OIOS recommendation database;

(b) An analysis of relevant information, documents and reports obtained from UNHCR on various topics related to the recommendations;

(c) Interviews with a purposive sample of key UNHCR staff.

5. The report incorporates comments received from UNHCR during the drafting process. A final draft was shared with UNHCR, on which comments were received (see annex). OIOS expresses its appreciation for the cooperation extended by UNHCR in the preparation of the present report.

II. Results

6. The mandate of UNHCR is to protect and assist refugees worldwide. UNHCR works to ensure that everyone has the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge, having fled violence, persecution, war or disaster at home. Approximately 17 million refugees are currently under the UNHCR mandate. UNHCR global strategic priorities are: (a) a favourable protection environment; (b) fair protection processes and documentation; (c) security from violence and exploitation; (d) basic needs and services; (e) community empowerment and self-reliance; and (f) durable solutions.[1]

7. The 2015 evaluation of UNHCR by OIOS focused on one of the agency's priorities, namely durable solutions. The ultimate goal of UNHCR was to achieve solutions and reduce the number of persons of concern. There were three primary durable solutions: (a) voluntary return; or (b) repatriation, resettlement to a third country; and/or (c) local integration into the host country (see E/AC.51/2015/5, para. 13). Since 2015, durable solutions have gained significant attention at the global level. In May 2016, the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul created an

[1] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "2016 global strategic priorities progress report", available at http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2016%20Global%20Strategic%20Priorities%20Progress%20Report.pdf.

international momentum to promote safe and durable solutions. In September 2016, United Nations Member States adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants with a strong commitment to finding long-term and sustainable solutions for refugees and migrants. The adoption of the New York Declaration was a milestone for refugee protection, as it marked a political commitment of unprecedented magnitude.[2] The changing global context had a significant impact on UNHCR and its approach to solutions, not least because UNHCR itself was at the forefront of the global debate. Most of all, it reinforced the commitment of Member States. UNHCR implementation of recommendations by OIOS was reviewed in this context.

8. OIOS made six recommendations to UNHCR: (1) implement multi-year planning and funding for solutions; (2) develop advocacy strategies for solutions; (3) enhance partnerships with development actors; (4) develop a staff strategy for strengthening solution activities; (5) conduct an assessment of the organizational structure with a view to finding solutions; and (6) create an evidence-based portfolio for solutions. Four recommendations were implemented (recommendations 1–3 and 5), while two were partially implemented (recommendations 4 and 6), with some evidence of concrete positive outcomes resulting from these. The implementation status of each of the six recommendations is discussed below.

Recommendation 1
Implement multi-year planning and funding for solutions

9. Recommendation 1 reads as follows:

> **Implement a multi-year planning cycle for solutions-related activities and pursue multi-year funding.** While enabling greater responsiveness to emergencies, the current one-year planning and funding cycle does not adequately support the achievement of longer-term objectives required for solutions. The existence of longer-term planning frameworks would not preclude shorter-term planning for other programming. It is, however, recognized that this recommendation would require changes to the programmatic, administrative and human resource configuration of UNHCR operations for protracted refugee situations. UNHCR should:
>
> (a) Develop and implement operational-level initiatives for protracted refugee situations with a view to designing a three-year framework and planning template, including needs analyses, partnerships models, benchmarks and targets and regular monitoring mechanisms, at the global, regional and operational levels;
>
> (b) Engage in advocacy with donors regarding multi-year funding and restructure the global appeals process to incorporate longer-term funding needs.
>
> ***Indicator of achievement***: planning framework template produced.

10. The evaluation report indicated that UNHCR operated under an annual planning and funding cycle, which enabled adjustment to needs as they arose in new or continuing crises. The short-term nature of the cycle was identified as a constraint to solutions programming, which has longer-term outcomes (E/AC.51/2015/5, para. 48). The solutions process and the mandate of UNHCR to remain engaged until solutions were found necessitated more development-oriented programming and longer-term planning than standard humanitarian operations, including a collaborative approach with development actors. While UNHCR achieved some gains in adapting its structure and thinking to accommodate the development dimensions, it was still

[2] UNHCR, "UNHCR welcomes 'unprecedented force and resonance' of New York Declaration", press release, 19 September 2016.

largely operating under a humanitarian service delivery model. The recommendation addressed the need for UNHCR to capitalize on opportunities to implement a systematic sustainable solutions-oriented approach.

11. In 2016, UNHCR launched the multi-year multi-partner protection and solutions strategies. The objective of the strategies was to address the economic, legal, sociocultural and civil-political dimensions necessary to secure solutions for populations of concern. The strategies had a three- to five-year timespan. UNHCR developed a template for country-level operations to prepare the strategies, including a situation analysis, a vision and strategic objectives, as well as information on key stakeholders, partnerships, resources, management, milestones, assumptions and risks. In parallel, UNHCR produced a document entitled "Supporting notes for operations developing a multi-year multi-partner protection and solutions strategy" to provide UNHCR operations with guidance on how to develop such a strategy.

12. UNHCR operations in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ghana, Senegal, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania developed and started implementing these new multi-year multi-partner protection and solutions strategies in 2016. These pilots provided an opportunity to test novel approaches to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of solutions programmes.[3] Early lessons learned from the initial pilots were gathered and analysed in 2017.[4] One of the key lessons learned was that longer-term strategizing had fostered "impact thinking" — thinking focused on long-term results — and allowed better planning for protection and solutions. The lessons learned from the pilots strongly recommended the establishment of multi-year, multi-partner strategizing as an organizational standard to increase UNHCR strategic capacity, predictability to partners and impact on the lives of people of concern. Subsequently, UNHCR decided that it should gradually move towards fully adopting multi-year planning for all its operations. Seventeen additional strategies were planned in 2017 with all UNHCR operations expected to have such strategies by 2020 (EC/68/SC/CRP.25, para. 15).

13. Discussions with donors on multi-year funding took place in several forums, principally linked to the follow-up on the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing adopted at the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016.[5] The Grand Bargain aims to reduce the humanitarian financing gap by improving the delivery and efficiency of aid. A total of 52 donors and aid organizations, which accounted for the lion's share of the international humanitarian response, had endorsed the Grand Bargain, with multi-year funding being one of the key commitments of the signatories. UNHCR was also a signatory of the Grand Bargain,[6] and it reported to its Executive Committee on progress towards implementing its Grand Bargain commitments (EC/68/SC/CRP.25). According to the 2016 Global Report,[7] 15 per cent of UNHCR contributions in that year were part of multi-year contributions covering more than 12 months, and the percentage of contributions for solutions that required more than 12 months to implement had also increased.

14. With the adoption of multi-year multi-partner protection and solutions strategies, UNHCR introduced a multi-year planning tool for solutions-related activities, which was tested in a few countries and thereafter rolled out to more countries. In parallel, UNHCR engaged with donors regarding increasing multi-year

[3] EC/67/SC/CRP.14, paras. 11–12.

[4] UNHCR, "Multi-year multi-partner pilot operations lessons learned report", multi-year multi-partner core team, August 2017.

[5] The Grand Bargain is a package of reforms that seeks to reduce the financing gap by improving the delivery and efficiency of aid.

[6] Andras Derzsi-Horvath, Julia Steets and Lotte Ruppert, "Independent Grand Bargain report" (Berlin, Global Public Policy Institute, 2017).

[7] UNHCR, "Global report 2016" (Geneva, 2016), p. 32.

funding and initiated a process to collect information that would allow it to demonstrate the positive impact that multi-year planning and funding was expected to bring to its operations. The aim was to use this information to advocate for increased multi-year financial contributions (EC/68/SC/CRP.25, para. 16). However, UNHCR staff interviewed indicated that it was too early to assess the outcomes of the strategies, as this approach was still rather new to the agency.

15. This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 2
Develop advocacy strategies for solutions

16. Recommendation 2 reads as follows:

> **Develop advocacy strategies for solutions at the global, regional and operational levels.** Effective advocacy at the global and operational levels is critical. Clear, sound and unified messages facilitate more effective communication with Governments and make full use of the political capital of UNHCR to assist in achieving solutions.
>
> ***Indicator of achievement***: global strategy document and operation-level strategies for certain operations in place.

17. The recommendation addressed the need for UNHCR to fully capitalize on opportunities to manoeuvre within the complex environments in which it worked. Most significantly, UNHCR had not consistently engaged in strategic advocacy with host Governments regarding local integration measures as a viable solution for refugees. Internal and external stakeholders saw greater advocacy with host countries at the national, regional and local levels as the primary approach for improving solution results. Stakeholders at the time of the evaluation also expressed the view that in order to address some of the obstacles to achieving solutions, enhanced advocacy could be undertaken with: (a) donors for increased and more flexible funding; (b) resettlement countries for higher quotas; and (c) countries of origin to develop more welcoming environments for returnees (E/AC.51/2015/5, para. 38).

18. On 19 September 2016, the General Assembly held a high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants to discuss the ways in which the international community could improve its response to large movements of refugees and migrants. At the summit, all 193 Member States unanimously adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. UNHCR viewed the New York Declaration, a political declaration, as very important and a key turning point in terms of advocacy for durable solutions. In the Declaration, Member States stated:

> "We commit to working towards solutions from the outset of a refugee situation. We will actively promote durable solutions, particularly in protracted refugee situations, with a focus on sustainable and timely return in safety and dignity. This will encompass repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities. We encourage Member States and other relevant actors to provide support through, inter alia, the allocation of funds."[8]

The New York Declaration, of which UNHCR was the main facilitator, was a global advocacy success for solutions. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees stated that the Declaration "marks a political commitment of unprecedented force and resonance" and "fills what has been a perennial gap in the international refugee

[8] General Assembly resolution 71/1, para. 75.

protection system — that of truly sharing responsibility for refugees, in the spirit of the United Nations Charter."[9]

19. To find durable solutions at the operational level, the New York Declaration was supplemented with the comprehensive refugee response framework. UNHCR was tasked by Member States to develop and initiate a comprehensive refugee response framework and in doing so, engage with Member States and consult with all relevant stakeholders.[10] The framework was to be applied in all large-scale refugee situations and carried out through a multi-partner process to map the needs and capabilities of refugees, their host communities and the systems that serviced them. Following the mapping, a response strategy was put in place, taking into account in a comprehensive manner contributions from the refugee communities, ministries, local governance systems, humanitarian and development partners as well as the private sector.[11] The objectives of the comprehensive refugee response framework were:[12]

- to ease pressures on the host countries involved
- to enhance refugee self-reliance
- to expand access to third-country solutions
- to support conditions in countries of origin for return with safety and dignity

20. As of January 2018, the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework was initiated by 13 States: Belize, Costa Rica, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, Mexico, Panama, Somalia, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. These were advocacy strategies for durable solutions at the operational level. For example, in Uganda, the Uganda comprehensive refugee response framework road map 2018–2020, endorsed on 31 January 2018, sets out the vision and strategic guidance on framework implementation in Uganda. The framework was fully initiated by the Government of Uganda, which assumed full leadership of the process with the support of UNHCR, and was launched in the country on 24 March 2017. To enable a comprehensive refugee response, the framework built on approaches that already existed in Uganda and addressed five themes: admission and rights; emergency response and ongoing needs; the resilience and self-reliance of refugees; the expansion of solutions through resettlement and complementary pathways; and voluntary repatriation. "Through the comprehensive refugee response framework governance structure, Uganda seeks to create a more predictable and sustainable approach to refugee management, respond more efficiently to the refugee emergency, and accelerate the implementation of the Government's Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE)[13] strategy. The underfunding of humanitarian response and the refugee-hosting districts facing major development issues were the main challenges of implementing the framework in Uganda".[14]

21. There were early successes in the practical application of the comprehensive refugee response framework since the New York Declaration, which UNHCR mapped in a progress report of 8 December 2017. Examples of the application of the

[9] UNHCR, "UNHCR welcomes 'unprecedented force and resonance' of New York Declaration".
[10] General Assembly resolution 71/1, annex I, paras. 2 and 18.
[11] UNHCR, "Supporting notes for operations developing a multi-year multi-partner protection and solutions strategy", 2016, p. 3.
[12] General Assembly resolution 71/1, annex I, para. 18.
[13] The refugee and host population empowerment strategy provided a national framework for integrated and holistic support to refugees and host populations and was incorporated into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.
[14] UNHCR, "Applying the comprehensive refugee response framework: overview — Uganda", October 2017.

framework included: (a) the new education policy for Djibouti, which enabled refugee children to be included in the national curriculum; and (b) the Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and the Reintegration of Returnees in Somalia, which was a regional initiative that helped shape the official narrative in host countries so that the positive contributions made by refugees to their societies were highlighted.[15] This was a significant success, given the challenging political environment.

22. With the New York Declaration and the comprehensive refugee response framework, UNHCR had a global advocacy tool for durable solutions and a tool for developing joint response advocacy strategies at the regional and operational level, to be applied in a growing number of regions and countries. This recommendation has been implemented, with advocacy for durable solutions continuing to be an ongoing task for UNHCR, as it was prior to the adoption of the New York Declaration.

Recommendation 3
Enhance partnerships with development actors

23. Recommendation 3 reads as follows:

> **Develop a schedule to ensure the conduct of regular, targeted meetings with development actors around a solutions/transition partnership coordination model.** Given that there are existing coordination models for emergency response, a model for solutions and the transition to development would clarify roles, enable joint programming and provide greater integration of refugee issues into national development programmes and priorities. UNHCR should schedule and conduct meetings with key development partners within and beyond the United Nations to develop that model.
>
> ***Indicator of achievement***: scheduled initial meeting, followed by quarterly meetings, regarding the development of the model.

24. This recommendation addressed the need for UNHCR to utilize partnerships and engagement with stakeholders on solutions to advance solutions objectives. The work of UNHCR with its United Nations partners had not been rated highly by the staff surveyed during the evaluation, who indicated that partnerships with the United Nations country teams and non-governmental organizations could be more strategic, especially insofar as the transition to development was concerned. Improving partnerships, especially with development actors, was seen by UNHCR staff as key for improving the ability of UNHCR to achieve durable solutions (E/AC.51/2015/5, paras. 51, 52).

25. During the period from 2015 to 2017, the collaboration between humanitarian and development agencies built on the changes brought about at the global level by the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 and the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, including the comprehensive refugee response framework. The World Humanitarian Summit recognized that:

> "... a new way of working is required that supports the leadership and capacity of national and local actors; that brings humanitarian and development actors together to work toward collective outcomes that not only meet needs but aim to reduce them".[16]

The comprehensive refugee response framework stated that:

[15] UNHCR, "Practical application of the comprehensive refugee Response Framework: preliminary progress update", 8 December 2017, table 1, and para. 25.

[16] "Commitments to action", World Humanitarian Summit, Istanbul, 23–24 May 2016.

> "Host States, in cooperation with the UNHCR and other United Nations entities, financial institutions and other relevant partners, would, as appropriate: ensure close cooperation and encourage joint planning, as appropriate, between humanitarian and development actors and other relevant actors."[17]

26. With the comprehensive refugee response framework, UNHCR and its partners found a solutions/transition partnership coordination model. UNHCR established a task team for the framework, which was responsible for its practical application. Notably, half of the team members were from other agencies, including development partners such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

27. The collaboration between the World Bank and UNHCR was further strengthened following the completion of the 2015 evaluation. What started in 2009 and accelerated in 2013 was instrumental for the establishment of the $2 billion refugee and host community subwindow of the eighteenth financing replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA 18) in December 2016.[18] At the time of the triennial review, eight countries — Cameroon, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, the Niger, Pakistan and Uganda — were considered eligible to access financing from the subwindow. In support of the IDA-18 refugee subwindow, UNHCR and the World Bank had undertaken 11 joint missions in 2017. These included a joint mission to the United Republic of Tanzania to look at the protracted displacement context and to Bangladesh to assess the policy and programmatic challenges of the Rohingya refugee situation. Another result of the partnership was the agreement to establish a joint data centre on forced displacement by the end of 2018, with the objective of enabling a better informed and more sustainable response to forced displacement, which would underpin a coordinated humanitarian-development approach.[19]

28. The collaboration between UNHCR and UNDP had also strengthened during the three years prior to the current review. In a joint letter from the UNDP Administrator and the High Commissioner, dated 30 October 2017, to the staff of both agencies, UNDP and UNHCR stressed the importance of the close collaboration between the two agencies and highlighted a number of areas in which cooperation should be strengthened, in particular the inclusion of refugees and internally displaced persons in national and local development programmes. A study commissioned by UNHCR and UNDP[20] found that the most important regional and country level collaboration between the two agencies was the Syrian Arab Republic crisis regional refugee resilience plan, which framed the United Nations response to displacement in five countries and attempted to reinforce the humanitarian-development nexus. Another multi-partner initiative that UNHCR joined in March 2017 was the joint global focal point arrangement for police, justice and corrections areas in the rule of law in post-conflict and other crisis situations. The arrangement was co-chaired by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNDP, and its partners included UN-Women, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNHCR.

29. Further examples demonstrated the enhanced collaboration of UNHCR with development partners, such as the joint action plan for 2017 by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNHCR, which was aimed, inter alia, at

[17] General Assembly resolution 71/1, annex I, para. 7 (e).

[18] Every three years, donors meet to replenish the resources of the International Development Association (IDA), which is the part of the World Bank that helps the world's poorest countries. The eighteenth such replenishment, IDA 18, was finalized in December 2016.

[19] See www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/10/59ea0f984/new-world-bank-unhcr-joint-data-centre-improve-global-statistics-forced.html.

[20] Simon-Lawry White, "Defining UNDP-UNHCR collaboration in key areas of work", study commissioned by UNHCR and UNDP, October 2017.

strengthening technical support to ILO and UNHCR field operations and programmes to increase employment, income and livelihoods opportunities and social protection for refugees and other persons of concern for UNHCR.

30. This recommendation has been implemented with the UNHCR rollout of the comprehensive refugee response framework as a coordination model, with the various intensified collaborations with development partners going beyond what the recommendation required.

Recommendation 4
Develop staff strategy for strengthening solution activities

31. Recommendation 4 reads as follows:

> **Develop a staff development strategy to strengthen skills for creating, implementing and assessing solutions strategies.** Emergency and humanitarian response skills are critical to achieving the goals of the organization; however, solutions activities require new skills. They can be acquired by:
>
> (a) Creating a staff development strategy focused on secondments and on the job training with development partners and providing training on solutions planning, livelihoods, early recovery and transition, advocacy and implementation of development projects, including monitoring and evaluation;
>
> (b) Developing and/or revising solutions and resilience job descriptions;
>
> (c) Requiring continuing leadership training focused on advocacy and negotiation skills.
>
> ***Indicators of achievement***: staff development strategy, revised job descriptions and training implemented.

32. The recommendation addressed the need for UNHCR to develop related staff skills and competencies in order to achieve solutions. UNHCR staffing structures, tools and resources were aligned with the traditional humanitarian service delivery models, which left little flexibility for more innovative development and solutions-oriented structures. Expertise in livelihoods and vocational training were limited. Also, relationships with host Governments to facilitate solutions often depended on personality factors, highlighting a need for increased diplomacy and advocacy skills among representatives and other senior staff (E/AC.51/2015/5, paras. 49, 50).

33. UNHCR did not develop a unified staff development strategy to strengthen skills for creating, implementing and assessing solutions strategies. However, several efforts were made to strengthen UNHCR staff capacity in the area of durable solutions, most notably through a joint UNHCR-World Bank training. The objective of the training was to better equip the staff of UNHCR and of the World Bank to engage with each other in view of the increasing interaction between the two agencies in the context of IDA 18[21] and the subwindow for refugees. In 2017, 122 UNHCR senior and technical staff (1 per cent of the total staff workforce) from headquarters and 18 operations[22] were provided with training in, inter alia, development responses to forced displacement and how to strengthen partnerships. The staff interviewed indicated that the training had not only built a common purpose, but was also helpful in establishing personal relationships between the staff of the two organizations,

[21] Replenishment of resources of the International Development Association.

[22] Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

which in turn helped to strengthen the partnership and the search for durable solutions.

34. Additionally, capacity-building for solutions was related to the roll-out of the multi-year multi-partner protection and solutions strategy. UNHCR prepared guidance material and a template for UNHCR operations to develop such strategies.[23] These were shared with the relevant field operations, and related training was conducted. The new approach was subsequently implemented in several countries (see recommendation 1 above). However, the staff interviewed indicated that, while extensive training on solutions for many staff had been conducted over the past few years, and while there was in-house expertise on solutions, more capacity-building was required, because while not all staff members needed to become solutions experts, every UNHCR staff member should have some understanding of solutions strategies.

35. To further strengthen solutions-related activities, staff job descriptions related to solutions were amended to explicitly include a solutions component, in particular for resettlement officers, protection officers and, most appropriately, durable solutions officers. Solution functions included in a sample of job descriptions are illustrated in table 1 below.

Table 1
Sample of Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees job descriptions with a solutions component

Job descriptions	*Typical functions related to solutions*
Resettlement Officer	"Contribute to the development and enhancement of strategies and mechanisms to address the resettlement needs of persons of concern in the context of comprehensive solution strategies."[a]
Protection Officer	"Ensure provision of durable solutions, through voluntary repatriation, local integration and, where appropriate, resettlement to the largest possible number of persons of concern."[b]
Senior Durable Solutions Officer for Somalia	"Coordinate the design and implementation of a comprehensive durable solutions strategy for Somalis in Somalia and in the region, with a view to finding durable solutions to the maximum number of persons of concern."[c]

[a] http://www.unhcr.org/525fcae09.pdf.
[b] http://www.unhcr.org/5242dcc89.pdf.
[c] http://www.unhcr.org/53d612d29.pdf.

36. Although UNHCR lacked a clear capacity-building strategy focused on solutions, this recommendation has been partially implemented through the efforts to strengthen staff capacity through training and revised job descriptions, a view shared by UNHCR.

[23] UNHCR, "Supporting notes for operations developing a multi-year multi-partner protection and solutions strategy", 2016, p. 3.

Recommendation 5
Conduct assessment of organizational structure for solutions

27. Recommendation 5 reads as follows:

> **Review existing internal solutions structures to assess whether restructuring could improve effectiveness in programming.** Solutions responsibilities currently fall under three divisions and across units at the operational level. An internal reconfiguration at the headquarters and field levels, resulting in a high-level integrated approach with an operational focus, may give greater prominence to solutions programming and clarify roles, responsibilities and internal coordination.
>
> ***Indicator of achievement***: assessment report of solutions structure produced.

28. The recommendation addressed the need for UNHCR to capitalize on opportunities to implement a sustainable solutions-oriented approach systematically (E/AC.51/2015/5, para. 42). While UNHCR had made some gains in shifting its structure to accommodate the development dimension, it was still largely operating under a humanitarian service delivery model. UNHCR staffing structures, tools and resources were also aligned with humanitarian service delivery models, which were seen as factors constraining achieving solutions. Solutions programming was split between protection and programme units in field operations: resettlement and registration staff were generally part of protection units, whereas livelihoods and other resilience activities fell under programme units. While that model was applicable to the traditional mandates of UNHCR, it left little flexibility for more innovative development and solutions-oriented structures (ibid.).

29. In 2016, the new High Commissioner mandated an organizational assessment of UNHCR headquarters to provide a comprehensive picture of the design, structure and underlying processes at headquarters. The main purpose of the review was a strategic realignment of the functions and systems at headquarters to ensure that these were functioning optimally in support of UNHCR field operations. The results of the rapid organizational assessment were presented in February 2017. With regard to solutions, the following recommendation was made:

> "UNHCR should establish a division for solutions, reporting to the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection. This would enable the organization to adopt an integrated approach to solutions and build on traditional in-house expertise on durable solutions while continuing to pursue solutions beyond traditional ones."[24]

30. The High Commissioner endorsed the recommendation and decided to create a new Division of Solutions, which would incorporate certain key capacities that were located in the Division of Programme Support and Management[25] and the Division of International Protection.[26] The new Division would report to the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection. The High Commissioner stressed that "while this effort will require careful calibration, including to define its scope and relationship with existing entities, I am convinced that the new Division will enable us to reinforce and elevate our strategic focus on solutions".[27]

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[24] UNHCR, "Headquarters review: rapid organisational assessment", February 2017, recommendation 14.

[25] The Operational Solutions and Transition Section promotes durable solutions for refugees through support to field operations and the strengthening of key linkages with development actors.

[26] Comprehensive Solutions Unit, supports regional bureaux and field offices in the design, development and implementation of comprehensive protection and solutions strategies.

[27] Filippo Grandi, High Commissioner, email to UNHCR staff at Headquarters and in the field.

41. A new Division of Resilience and Solutions, under the leadership of the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, was established on 1 February 2018. The objective of the new Division was described as supporting regional bureaux and field operations in developing comprehensive solutions strategies and ensuring that all UNHCR efforts to build protection and provide support to refugees and the internally displaced were underpinned by the aim of building resilience and working towards solutions. Senior staff interviewed indicated that the new Division was expected to help to advance solutions as a UNHCR priority, that it was an important in-house signal to this effect, and that it could help to unlock the potential available in UNHCR and among partners to find durable solutions.

42. This recommendation has been implemented. UNHCR will need time to determine the full impact of the new structure on solutions.

Recommendation 6
Create an evidence-based portfolio for solutions

43. Recommendation 6 reads as follows:

> **Create an evidence-based portfolio to be used for strengthening and advocating solutions, including by:**
>
> (a) Conducting regular systematic assessments of solutions initiatives;
>
> (b) Strengthening the documentation and dissemination of lessons learned and/or best practices;
>
> (c) Initiating or strengthening partnerships with academic institutions to answer key questions through research and guide development and advocacy initiatives in relation to solutions strategies.
>
> ***Indicators of achievement***: evaluation plan for solutions initiatives, best practices portal and research plan with academic partners established.

44. The recommendation addressed the need for UNHCR to generate sufficient evidence to inform national decision-making and policy formulation around solutions, such as the positive contributions made by refugees to the economies and social stability of host States, including through employment creation for nationals. The evaluation report indicated that evidence-based examples of positive outcomes may facilitate more effective dialogue with national Governments where political will had been lacking, especially in advocating local integration (E/AC.51/2015/5, para. 39).

45. UNHCR staff emphasized that they worked towards durable solutions for refugees as part of the UNHCR mandate and therefore, an assessment of solutions was an integral part of every country programme. Durable solutions were systematically assessed as part of all country programme evaluations. Therefore, UNHCR did not require an evaluation plan specifically for solutions. The evaluation plan of the UNHCR Evaluation Service encompassed the assessment of solutions as part of the regular country programme evaluations.

46. A review of a sample of the recent evaluations commissioned by UNHCR indicated that durable solutions were included in country programme evaluations. Examples of country evaluations are indicated in Table 2 below.

30 March 2017.

Table 2
Durable solutions, an integral part of country programme evaluations

Country programme evaluation	*Examples of durable solutions*
Evaluation of the UNHCR Ukraine country programme, commissioned by the UNHCR Evaluation Service, conducted by Universalia, 2017	Finding 10: "In Ukraine, UNHCR has implemented several solutions-oriented activities, but did not have a formal internally displaced persons solutions strategy."
Evaluation of the UNHCR emergency response to the influx of Syrian refugees into Turkey, commissioned by the UNHCR Evaluation Service, conducted by Universalia, 2016	Finding 38: "Durable solutions are still a distant prospect for refugees in Turkey, and the default path of longer stay in Turkey, with temporary status but most economic and social rights, seems the most likely."
Evaluation of the UNHCR response to the level 3 South Sudan refugee crisis in Uganda and Ethiopia, UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service, 2016	Recommendation 16: "Develop an action plan for strengthening access to post-primary education for refugee children and adolescents in line with UNHCR objective to achieve integration into national services and in light of possible durable solutions."

47. While UNHCR documented experiences in the area of solutions, they did not have a best practices portal or a research plan on durable solutions. During the period from 2015 to 2017, UNHCR worked with the World Bank to produce a number of major studies documenting the experience in several countries, thereby broadening the evidence base that supported decision-making. Examples of these experiences are indicated in table 3 below. All three examples of the studies analysed addressed durable solutions and the nexus between humanitarian work and development cooperation.

Table 3
Durable solutions: UNHCR and World Bank documented experiences

Study	*About the study*
World Bank/UNHCR, "'Yes' in my back yard? The economics of refugees and their social dynamics in Kakuma, Kenya", 2016	"Therefore, with plenty of original analytical and empirical analyses, this report, conducted jointly by the World Bank and UNHCR, attempts to address this pressing need. It aims to strengthen the evidence base so that policymakers, and humanitarian and development actors, can make informed decisions about how best to transform refugee camps such as Kakuma into self-sustaining settlements, and how to design win-win deals that benefit both refugee and host populations."
World Bank/UNHCR, "The welfare of Syrian refugees: evidence from Jordan and Lebanon", 2016	"UNHCR and the World Bank Group are working together to analyse this evidence, and to ensure that policymakers and advocates have the knowledge they need to better serve refugee communities. The World Bank Group know-how on welfare and targeting, combined with the UNHCR expertise on the needs of refugees, can lead to more effective analyses and policies for registered Syrian refugees living in Jordan and Lebanon."

Study	*About the study*
	"This book is the result of a comprehensive collaboration between the two institutions. It aims to increase our understanding and ultimately improve the well-being of Syrian refugees."
World Bank, "Forcibly displaced: toward a development approach supporting refugees, the internally displaced and their hosts", 2017	"The study recommends ways to help the forcibly displaced access jobs and opportunities. Produced in partnership with UNHCR, the study outlines how we can build resilience while supporting inclusive and sustainable growth in host countries."

48. Additionally, UNHCR and the World Bank agreed to establish a joint data centre to improve global statistics on forced displacement, refugees, other displaced people and host communities. It was expected that the data centre would be operational in 2018. The objective of the new centre was defined to enable a better-informed and more sustainable response to forced displacement, which would underpin a coordinated humanitarian-development approach. It was expected to build on the role of UNHCR as the reference institution for refugee data, bringing in the World Bank Group's analytical expertise and experience in helping national Governments improve statistical capacity.[28]

49. In 2017, UNHCR embarked on a multi-year longitudinal evaluation on humanitarian-development cooperation, called the Luxembourg project. This research project supported an evidence base and documentation for engaging with development actors to leverage their analytical, technical and financial capabilities to better respond to the needs of refugees, other forcibly displaced persons and host communities. The multi-year research project is expected to provide robust cumulative evidence to provide information to UNHCR on ways of working in the longer term.[29]

50. In 2017, UNHCR prepared a report on lessons learned from the multi-year, multi-partner pilot operations and discussed the main lessons learned from the pilot strategies.[30]

51. While UNHCR undertook major efforts to strengthen the evidence base for solutions that could be used for further advocacy, there was no specific evaluation plan regarding solutions, no best practices portal and no research plan on solutions. There remained scope to bring the different documented experiences together in order to provide an easily accessible portal to past evaluations and research activities. At the same time, a research plan of scheduled research and evaluation activities on solutions would be beneficial to efforts to generate synergies and avoid duplication. The new Division of Resilience and Solutions could potentially be tasked with establishing the portal of documented experience and a research plan of scheduled research and evaluation activities.

52. This recommendation has been partially implemented.

[28] www.unhcr.org/news/press/2017/10/59ea0f984/new-world-bank-unhcr-joint-data-centre-improve-global-statistics-forced.html

[29] UNHCR, "Multi-year longitudinal evaluation on humanitarian-development cooperation ("Luxembourg project")", 2017.

[30] UNHCR, "Multi-year multi-partner pilot operations, lessons learned report", 2017.

III. Conclusion

53. UNHCR took significant steps to implement all recommendations contained in the OIOS evaluation of 2015. With the New York Declaration, the comprehensive refugee response framework and the multi-year multi-partner protection and solutions strategies, UNHCR had not only developed and adopted global, regional and local advocacy tools to find solutions, it was also clearly shifting to a multi-year planning and funding approach for solutions, which was being applied to a growing number of regions and countries. At the same time, UNHCR significantly enhanced collaboration with development partners such as the World Bank and significantly strengthened the evidence base for decision-making around solutions. While still at an early stage, preliminary results were emerging at the field level as a consequence of the framework and the multi-year multi-partner protection and solutions strategies. Another positive indicator was the growing share of financial resources that exceeded a 12-month implementation period.

54. Three important changes remained to be fully implemented; (a) while in-house capacities for solutions were built, continued and more systematic efforts were required in order to strengthen skills for creating, implementing and assessing solutions strategies; (b) the recently established Division of Resilience and Solutions had yet to be made operational which, once fully functional, could potentially plan and coordinate evaluation and research activities for solutions at the corporate level; and (c) there was a continued need to better organize and bring together documented experience around solutions in an easily accessible place.

(*Signed*) Heidi **Mendoza**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services
March 2018

Annex*

Comments received from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the formal draft report of the triennial review of the implementation of recommendations of the programme evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Pursuing durable solutions for refugees is a core component of the mandate of UNHCR, along with providing international protection. We are pleased to see that OIOS has noted that UNHCR has taken several measures to create, implement and strengthen solutions strategies since the evaluation. Indeed, the report effectively recognizes that UNHCR actions have, to a notable degree, exceeded that required by the recommendations.

The situation has evolved considerably since the time of the evaluation. Processes at the political, policy and operational level, including the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework, the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing, the ongoing reform of the United Nations Development System, and bilateral partnerships with the World Bank Group and UNDP have all in different ways informed the way in which UNHCR work on solutions is now carried out. As a result, UNHCR strategic engagement and execution of efforts on solutions has shifted toward a more coordinated, inclusive and catalytic approach.

As noted in the review report, the comprehensive refugee response framework provides an overall framework and platform for increased collaboration and partnerships toward a "whole-of-society" response to solutions. Given the different aspects of solutions, and the need for strategies adapted to the many different environments in which UNHCR operates, there is no single model or approach. Rather, the framework enables UNHCR to take different contexts and aspects of solutions into account in developing bespoke models, as applicable and desirable, in order to advance appropriate solutions globally and in specific operations.

In keeping with these many developments, UNHCR is currently undertaking deeper structural and programmatic reforms, including those noted in the report by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). Our investments in improving registration data, results-based management and programme planning in sectors such as energy, education, livelihoods and protection monitoring are in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the principle of "leave no one behind". These reforms will enable UNHCR to fulfil its core mandate more effectively and efficiently, including towards durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced and stateless people.

UNHCR therefore acknowledges and appreciates the positive comments made about the efforts made to implement all six recommendations of the OIOS evaluation. In particular, it appreciates that four of the six recommendations are considered implemented. With reference to the first recommendation, UNHCR appreciates the efforts of many donors to provide multi-year funding. However, the bulk of support for UNHCR continues to be received on an annual basis.

* In the present annex, the Office of Internal Oversight Services presents the full text of comments received from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. This practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.

Regarding the other two recommendations, UNHCR concurs that these are partially implemented. However, the specific actions and indicators proposed by the evaluation, namely the development of a staff development strategy (recommendation 4) and the creation of an evaluation or research plan and best practices portal (recommendation 6) regarding solutions, need to be viewed within the larger context described above.

Building staff capacities and skills is an ongoing systematic effort that is progressing on multiple fronts. Overall, it is important to bear in mind that the design of solutions is not a straightforward technical task to which standard operating procedures can be applied. Necessarily, any capacity-building strategy must also reflect this complexity. UNHCR has made substantial and systematic progress through a number of related efforts. First, the organization has steadily increased its capacity to engage with development partners and private sector partners. Second, UNHCR has reflected a focus on solutions in the job descriptions of protection officers and created new positions, such as comprehensive refugee response framework officers and development advisers, at various levels. Third, the newly created Division of Resilience and Solutions presents an opportunity to bring together strands of related work on solutions into a cohesive whole, including the various competencies within the organization that work on solutions.

UNHCR is pleased to inform the Committee on Programme and Coordination that the new Division of Resilience and Solutions was formed on 1 February 2018 and is expected to be fully operational in the coming months. The Division has developed its objectives and vision, created an organization chart and assigned staff and is conducting an annual planning and budgeting process.

In terms of creating an evidence-based portfolio and a research and evaluation plan regarding solutions, UNHCR is undertaking several reforms related to data, results-based management and evaluation. The UNHCR work on solutions does not stand alone, and evidence generated on protection, sectoral programming and assistance is linked to and touches on aspects of solutions.

The new Division of Resilience and Solutions will indeed take on appropriate research work, while the responsibility for evaluation will remain with the Evaluation Service. Therefore, the UNHCR Evaluation Service prepares an annual evaluation plan and continues to strengthen its monitoring of programming in areas essential to measuring the extent of achievement of solutions, including in education, energy, health and livelihoods.

Similarly, efforts to build best practices, increase knowledge management and disseminate evidence in relation to solutions are undertaken together with other related efforts, and not in isolation. UNHCR is rolling out new web portals for various sectors available to all stakeholders, sharing lessons learned and best practices in a number of forums and investing in data and evidence on forced displacement. The synthesis and collation of such evidence and research rests with the various divisions and with the Evaluation Service.